

5/9/71

Dear Jim,

The whores, lickspittles and axmen are lining up against my new book, but I enclose a couple of the good reviews. The publisher is such a mess that the more paranoid, like Bud, figure he sold out. I've not yet gotten the miserably few free copies I'm supposed to get nor the second instalment of the "advance", due three months ago. Sp, what little promotion there has been has been 100% not of his doing, by young friends in New York and by me, and the sale has been largely on my reputation, plus the subject. They are losing a potential fortune, as you'll realize when you read the book. Even Percy Foreman fled a TV studio when he learned he was to confront me. That is what I have. But it means that I'm even busier than ever, getting no writing done, and wearying rapidly as the emotional drain is added to the physical drain of such seven long and hard years. Thus I hope you will understand that I can't make the detailed reply your letter warrants. Nor will I be diplomatic and try and sugar-coat. Most of what you have been fed is rubbish.

I was glad to see that story from Confidential. They had one Joel Palmer in N.O., and he, Boxley and Turner, between them, almost ruined Jim personally. I was able to block that, but I've never gotten entirely over the terrible strain it was. What happened is great compared to what would have happened. Even Sciambra said that had I not been able to do what I did Jim would have been disbarred by the Supreme Court.

The C piece is shit. P was never called as a witness, was he? And B had died several years earlier than this alleged letter is alleged to have been written. Palmer and C are capable of having invented it, any nut could have given it to Jim and he'd have gone for it (you gave no idea what he did go for!), for he is, alas, paranoid as he can be, for all his brilliance, a sick man. Too many have gotten this way, including one of the first "critics", Salandria. They, including Bud, got to visualize a conspiracy that involved everyone from the lowliest charmaid in Justice to Warren and including all the many tentacles of the intelligence community. One claims to have proof that Johnson and Rusk (in a second version Dulles) actually met and plotted the foul deed all over Texas the week before it happened. Then there is the sincerely-believed story that Brown & Root excavated Dealey Plaza, undetected, at night, for an escape route for an assassin hidden in a papier-mache tree that also was spirited away. It is incredible and it involves too many too sincere. You are caught up in all this rot and illness.

Nagell was CIA. He had a strange survival of things few are able to survive, including the disintegration of an airplane high in the air. But he is batty as an old, abandoned belfry. There is nothing to connect him with anything but his own ravings and the wishful thinking of those who prefer conjecture to hard work. Except in an effort to prevent damage from this, I've spent no time on this. One of his associates planted that put-on that may have been designed to ruin Jim, retitled to "Farewell America", on Jim, and what a job I had coping with that. But on the personal end, my foreman days are over with the last experience, which I spare you.

I take this time, which I do not have, to spare you needless pain, and I do so in confidence, trusting you not to spread disunity. But I also do not want you to mirror yourself and to suffer the frustrations you will not be able to meet as well as I have, from fewer years and less knowledge and experience. Almost all of these are in all other ways very decent, deeply-concerned people, but when their egos get involved, they are nuts and do disreputable things. They can all taste the fame of solving the assassinations, and it drives them to what in all other areas would be impossible for them. Conspicuously Bud, whose CIA is a miserable, counterproductive nothing save for the puffery he has been able to arrange. Once the Shaw trial was over, it became the greatest impediment to our recapture of credibility. I've saved them several times, but I can't waste myself on this any more, for there is no end to it and I'll not spend my life and work that way.

Sprague, who is on their board, has written and published worse than vomit, and has all over again destroyed our credibility. Imagine such rot as "about" six "confessions" from the actual assassins, of whom he says 50 were in Dealey Plaza! "About"? Can't he count? These nuts steal and use out of context the work of other, ruin what they try and do things with, and I mean they've blown any chances of carrying several very promising investigations any further. Believe me or not, Jim, I'm saying it as it is, and I'll not be able to take the time to argue or persuade you. I'm just trying to make this one effort to spare you. We'll be lucky to survive this well-intentioned wrong.

You misread Hoover from his long-time and very effective propaganda. He above all boxed the members of the Commission in. One, whose name I will not now use, told me he was satisfied they'd been told neither all nor the truth. If you've studied as many FBI reports as I, you'd understand. Take a few samples from my simpler work, those Wack reports on 544 and the people there, those on the LHO literature, and you can see it easily, but you must multiply this enormously to get the entire picture of what he did. And he withheld much from the Commission. I'm preparing to sue for some of this. Suit is a ticklish, costly and dangerous thing, for there is always the danger of establishing evil precedent.

The exhibits you list lack probity. I do not recall having the Nagell pamphlet and would ~~like~~ like to see it. Garrison in Playboy made it up as he went. He can support none of it, including what he took from others and didn't really understand when he did. You have to begin by understanding that he did virtually no investigation in N.O. where he had so many enormously promising possibilities (what the hell do you think I was doing there?) and got bullshit from his sycophants from elsewhere. He never did a really competent interview with a single witness or alleged witness of which I know, and his people were out of their depth in this kind of work. They no doubt are competent in straight police work. You have no idea how many simple things they asked me to do for them, and I was astounded that they didn't trust themselves to do them. On judgement, if and when you see Louis again, I'm sure he'll remember that a year and a half before they finally learned, I warned him about Bethell, of whom I'd learned enough, and made keeping what I gave them entirely secret a precondition of any other association. But Lou couldn't keep his boss from having what I gave Lou, and Jim broadcast it among his assassins, who usually managed to get it back to those involved, thus blowing those investigations. Penn Jones was probably the first paranoid of all. His work was never dependable. It took me too long to come to understand this. Barry's work is unoriginal but good. It was given him by the Miami police. He declined to help me carry it further, as you will see I have done in FRAME-UP, but much less than in the original longer work that had to be condensed. Computers got the few of the relevant reports they printed second-hand. Neither they nor Sprague ever did any original work. They looked for sensation and grabbed whoever's work they could. I've mislaid my Barry file and for its completeness would like copies of his stories. What is likely is that I loaned them to someone who never returned them. Skolnick stole what little he had, and that he misused miserably, by imposing on a young man who was helping me with the original form of F-U, called CPUP. He never understood it but saw the ~~chance~~ chance for the publicity he got. He is as sick in mind as he is, tragically, twisted in body. He knows less about the assassination than almost anyone. He is a thief, and so very sick. Except for toilet paper, there is nothing in anything Sprague has written, so I'll not refer to that again. Hicks is in the muthatch, where he belonged all along. And that is not an aerial trailing from his pocket, nor was there need for any, and had there been, it would never have been visible. LA Free Press, feeding on sensation, took JG or anyone else, notoriously Mark, as gospel. It is not that B didn't live with Ferrie, and I neither know nor care, it is that the rest was invention and he was sick and weird. They had to turn him out of N.O. Ferrie was bright. He undoubtedly did say that JG had him pegged as the getaway pilot, and Jim knew so little that this may even have been true at that time. Turner's stuff is trash. None of it is original. He is so incompetent that when he was sent to pick up still pictures he spent all his time telling the guy who had them what kind of great investigator he was, got a remote-generation print of the movie we

already had instead, flew to NO with it, Jim went ~~in~~ into ecstasies over it, phoned me in Dallas to share this great new discovery of "his" with me, when I was working productively in Dallas, insisted that I leave Dallas, was so paranoiac he wouldn't tell me what it was, and when I got back to N.O., the trifle they had was so poor that they looked at mine, which I had with me. I don't think I have what he did on the "Minutemen" or "Reviewing the Ray case", but in neither is it original. Jones was one of his sources on the M and deP and it is possible that on Ray Bud fed him my material on Ray, for he is on Bud's board. Or, it could have come from the papers. But a single dependable thing from Turner's own investigations I have yet to see.

I know Renfro. He has been sick for years and, fortunately, gets advance indications and turns himself in so that when the attacks really hit he is in the hospital. Some of his stuff is, nonetheless, genuine, but nothing can be taken as straight if it comes from him. For example, he confessed a number of manufactures to me, like that stock of the rifle bit. His idea was to drive the prosecutor crazy! Charge, as you should now understand, is done. The manner in which some of what may have been genuine was misused destroyed any possibility of achieving credibility for it. Bud wasted an enormous amount of time on him. The only thing that ever persuaded me to spend a minute reading that stuff was the reputation of his lawyer, who soon left him, and of Noguchi.

Some of the stuff in N.O. magazine may be of a different character. Before Hoke May met and switched to the bitch who then worked for the FBI, he was straight and was a very good newsman, one of the better ones. There is a book he can do that I hope he will. But after taking up with this gal he began drinking so heavily I do not recall having ever seen a man as disgustingly drunk as he was. However, they are responsible as, for example, Ramparts on this subject and the Free Press never were, and there may be value in those pieces, if they do not merely parrot Jim. The Butler piece you sent was helpful, but it is part of a large picture only. The others may have similar values.

You can't begin to cope with Aynsworth, who has built his subsequent career over his dishonest writing on the JFK case and that, in turn, was possible because he would use without question whatever was leaked to him. He is parti pris and can't face either fact or his own record, and on neither can you cope with him. You have neither the knowledge nor the experience, and I feel the result will depress and embarrass you. I've never read Kirkwood's book, not being able to afford it and believing it irrelevant anyway.

On a personal level, and the source may have it wrong (but has been dependable and a productive friend to me in the past), I've been told that Garrison doesn't want me to return to N.O. I have no plans for so doing, but should I ever feel I have both the need and the financing, I would. There came a time when he had to have told the staff to cut off all relations with me. He is deeply hurt that I predicted exactly what happened in the Shaw trial, in fine detail, was right in all details, including the reasons, and left N.O. to spend that time usefully. For a while I did hear from some, especially when they needed help, but that cut off sharply, and I'm leaving it that way. Perhaps if and when you see Louis, of whom I'm fond and if the occasion were to come up, would tell you that I've helped him when he needed help, he'd confirm this to you, but it is immaterial.... In short, you are chasing a shadow, and I hate to see you wasting time that way. Putting together the work of others is generally valueless, for they usually know more about it, and when you are retreading sand you will not build a house or a tire or anything of substance. Do your own thing your own way, independently, after you have learned enough about what is fact, and you may accomplish something. But you have not mentioned a single dependable source in that long letter. I'd not be a friend if I told you otherwise. Please understand that my own work and my ever-increasing weariness makes letters of such length too great a burden. This one is motivated by friendship and appreciation. Whether or not you believe these unpleasant things, you will eventually learn that if anything I have understated. Thanks and best wishes,